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Housekeepers' Chat

Monday, February 17, 1930

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Ideals for the Home of Today." Information taken from article by Anna Dee Weaver, in The Nebraska Farmer, January 18, 1930. Menu from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes."

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I have a most enthusiastic letter this morning, from Mary Alice, a friend of mine who attended the Home Economics meetings in Lincoln, Nebraska, last month. I see "by the program" that Mary Rokahr, of Washington, D. C., gave a talk on "Home Management Ideals." I wish I had a copy of her talk. Mary Rokahr is the first national Extension Economist in Home Management, and a mighty nice person to know. Perhaps you have met her, in her travels over the country.

In the course of her talk on "Home Management Ideals," Miss Rokahr said: "None enjoy life as little, as those who have nothing to do." (Thank goodness, that's one problem which never bothers me.) Homemakers tell Miss Rokahr that they can manage cooking, washing, cleaning, and baking, but they need help in conserving their time and energy for more important things. One woman told Miss Rokahr she was tired of hearing the old quotation about man working from sun to sun, but woman's work being never done. Well, if our work is never done, perhaps it's our own fault. Maybe there's something wrong with the way we schedule and plan our work.

During the course of her travels, Miss Rokahr meets hundreds of homemakers. She says she thinks of them as being stretched out in a long line in front of her. At one end of the line is the efficient homemaker, with a spotless house, meals served on time, and delicious food, but -- the man of the house must take off his shoes before he steps upon the kitchen floor. No magazine or book is left out of place, in this painfully spotless house.

At the other end of the line of homemakers we find the person who always has plenty of time for outside activities, but when we drop into her home we find nothing in order. Dirt and dust have accumulated, meals are not on time, and there is never a clean towel in the drawer. Neither one of these women is a true homemaker.

The ideal homemaker stands in the center of the line. She combines the efficiency of the first with the community interests of the second. She enjoys physical health by properly ventilating her house, and by using sufficient light for work and reading. She selects her food wisely, and has a physical examination each year. She stands and sits correctly, sits down whenever possible when doing household work, and wears comfortable clothing. She enjoys mental well-being, because she enjoys homemaking. She has a sense of humor, she is cheerful, she is cooperative. She makes her home enjoyable to her family, and takes an interest in community affairs. She uses efficient methods and tools, and plans her time

and money expenditures wisely. She definitely provides for some leisure time. Each week she take time to do something entirely different, to play. She reads something worth while each week, and develops an appreciation of music, books, and pictures.

I wonder how many of us would fit into Miss Rokahr's picture of the ideal homemaker? According to the latest census report -- but I don't believe the latest census reports ideal homemakers. Perhaps it's just as well -- some of us would never get in.

Besides Miss Rokahr's talk, there were many others. Dr. Marjorie Clark of Nebraska University spoke about budgets. "Income can be made larger by wise spending," said Doctor Clark. "If it is to be stretched at the spending end, women must do it, since women do about 85 per cent of the buying in the United States. They must have a spending plan, a budget, based upon the family's own spending records." (Do you suppose Doctor Clark mentioned the budget leaflet I've been telling you about, and the loose-leaf household account book?)

Then there was a talk by Miss Mary Mason, also of the University. Miss Mason spoke about home equipment. She advised the women to select utensils according to their needs, and the size of their families, and the storage space available. Too much equipment is a burden, and too little is a handicap. Often we waste time using a percolator which will not stand straight, and yet we hesitate to throw it away, because it still works. The right utensils promote efficient habits of work.

Miss Bess Steele of the University talked about "Pictures for the Home." She said that pictures for the home should be chosen according to the room in which they are to be placed, and according to the preference of the person who will occupy that room. Pictures best suited to the living rooms are landscapes, marines, those which tell a story, and fine portraits.

Suitable pictures for the dining room are garden scenes, and flower or fruit pictures done in a gay and decorative manner. For the library, etchings, engravings, and historical scenes are good. Personal pictures are best used in the bedroom.

"Pictures should typify peace, quiet, and comfort," said Miss Steele. "They should be selected as companions are selected--for their friendliness, their cordiality, their sympathy and stimulation and inspiration. Since pictures must satisfy us for a number of years, the jazzy ones are not a wise choice. Pictures appear to much better advantage if we give them the right kind of associates, such as a table with attractive pottery, book ends, a lamp and other objects carefully chosen so that the group is harmonious."

Miss Steele's talk reminds me of something I read the other day, by a noted artist.

"There is no single way in which a person reveals himself so completely as he does through his choice of pictures and decorative objects," she writes. "For that reason it is not fair to one's self to keep pictures on the walls which have been outgrown intellectually or esthetically, for it must be recognized that when a person has pictures about him, he is electing them to speak for him."

What else did the women talk about, in their home economics meetings? Furniture arrangement, kitchens, and kerosene stoves.

"Furniture is the first thing to be considered in the rearrangement of a room, for harmony. Large pieces should be located in the center of each wall. Rugs should parallel the walls," advised a professor of design. Have you ever gone into a home, where all the rugs were placed obliquely? Gives you a dizzy feeling, doesn't it? Rugs should be placed straight on floors, parallel with the walls--in a straight-line arrangement. An interior decorator friend of mine says that placing rugs obliquely is as bad as hanging pictures that way.

I know the women must have spent a great deal of time talking about kitchens, but Mary Alice has neglected to write me the details. She says, briefly: "More attention is being paid to the kitchen at this time. A gay colored print upon its barren walls may indeed be a magic window for the one who spends much time there."

Mrs. Edna Snyder told women how to get the best results from kerosene stoves; she urged them to follow the instruction sheet furnished by the manufacturer, and to keep the burners clean. She feels that pans for kerosene stoves are sometimes purchased because they are pretty, rather than because they are efficient. Much fuel is wasted by not having pans of proper size. She says that flat bottomed pans, 9 inches in diameter, were found in tests to be most efficient on ordinary burners, and those 12 inches in diameter for use on giant burners.

But here it is, almost time for me to leave, and haven't mentioned dinner. If she is listening-in, the Menu Specialist will be wondering whether I've forgotten the menu. No indeed -- here it is -- or there it is -- anyway, it's somewhere. Has anybody seen a menu, written on pink paper, beginning with Creamed Finnan Haddie? Ah, here we are! In my apron pocket. Creamed Finnan Haddie; Baked Potatoes; Stewed Tomatoes and Onions; Lettuce Salad; and Blueberry Pie. That's a real dinner, if I do say it as shouldn't. Shall I read it again? Creamed Finnan Haddie; Baked Potatoes; Stewed Tomatoes and Onions; Lettuce Salad; and Blueberry Pie.

Tuesday: "From the Mailbag."

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